

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,
As a GED instructor, I am appalled at how ill-informed most of my students are. They rarely recognize the faces and names of the people who represent us in Congress and the White House. I believe they have turned aside from the political scene because there is so little meaningful content on radio and television these days. They rightly see the few, tiny soundbites we get as meaningless and unfortunately have decided that all politics are meaningless. They have dropped out of the national debate; they have stopped voting or paying attention to issues. This is dangerous, to all concerned, no matter what political party one belongs to.

Citizens need to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect us. I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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